

Candidate Information Booklet

Probation Officer

In preparing the Probation Officer Examination for the California Board of Corrections, Personnel Decisions, Inc. has taken into account the following documents concerning selection testing:

- The American Psychological Association, Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests.
- The APA Division of Industrial-Organizational Psychology, Principles for the Validation and Use of Personnel Selection Procedures, 2nd edition.
- The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures.

Probation Officer Candidate Information Booklet

Overview

The Probation Officer Candidate Information booklet is designed to serve four functions:

- to provide background information about the development and validation of the Probation Officer Examination;
- to familiarize candidates with the examination format;
- to preview the contents of the Probation Officer Examination; and
- to provide sample problems (with answers) to help candidates prepare for the examination.

Description of the Probation Officer Job

The probation officer, under the direction of the Chief Probation Officer, provides for the protection of the community and its citizens by conducting probation investigations, writing reports for the courts and enforcing orders of the court related to probationer supervision. The probation officer, as the agent of the Chief Probation Officer, fulfills a variety of functions. These include the following:

- **Peace Officer:** As an officer of the court, exercises those peace officer powers over clients which may be necessary for the protection of the community and resocialization of the client.
- **Agent of Change:** Acting as broker of services, serves and involves the client with supportive agencies or persons to bring about change in the client's behavior.
- **Social Diagnostician:** Prepares probation social studies and reports that identify and evaluate factors causing criminal or delinquent behavior and develops and recommends programs to eliminate or correct these factors.

The major tasks and responsibilities include the following:

- Detention Decisions
- Adult and Juvenile Investigation
- Recommendations to the Court
- Monitoring and Supervising Probationers
- Setting Up Collection of Restitution, Fines and Other Payments
- Making Referrals to Providers of Medical, Mental Health, Social Service, Education, Employment and Other Services
- Preparing Court Reports and Related Documents
- Testifying and Answering Questions in Court

Development of the Probation Officer Examination

The Probation Officer Examination was developed as a result of a three-year statewide analysis of the probation officer position. The analysis was undertaken as a result of state legislative action that mandated, among other things, the development and validation of entry-level selection procedures for the probation officer job.

Examination development began with a review of job descriptions and related documentation, site visits, and interviews with probation officer incumbents and supervisors, culminating in the development of a job

analysis questionnaire. This questionnaire was administered to probation officer incumbents and supervisors from agencies throughout California. Questionnaire results were used to determine the nature of the probation officer job and to develop a clear and comprehensive description of the knowledges, skills, abilities, and personal characteristics necessary for successful job performance.

Several tests were identified as being good measures of the knowledges, skills, and abilities identified in the job analysis questionnaire. These tests were administered to a sample of probation officer incumbents. At the same time, incumbents' supervisors rated their performance in specific job areas. The Probation Officer Examination represents the combination of tests found, on the basis of test scores and job performance ratings, to provide a reliable, valid, and fair indication of incumbents' abilities to successfully perform the job.

Examination Format

The Probation Officer Examination consists of a single test booklet and an accompanying answer sheet. You will answer all examination questions on the answer sheet - **DO NOT MARK IN THE TEST BOOKLET ITSELF**. Typically, testing will be done in a group setting. The Probation Officer Examination has three parts, each of which is timed. Time limits have been set so that you should have plenty of time to complete all items. Total testing time will be approximately 1-1/2 hours.

Preparing for the Probation Officer Examination

This booklet is designed to familiarize you with the types of items you will find in the Probation Officer Examination. A brief description of the ability or skill measured in each part of the exam is given below and worked examples of the types of items you will find in each part are presented. For Parts 1 and 2 of the examination, short practice tests are given to help you better prepare for taking the Probation Officer Examination.

Part 1. Analogies. Part 1 contains 35 problems that measure how well you understand the relationships between words, objects, and concepts. Each problem is an analogy in the form of a sentence with the first and last words omitted. For each problem, five pairs of words are given. The first word of each pair always goes at the beginning of the sentence and the second word of each pair always goes at the end of the sentence. You are to choose the pair of words that completes the sentence and makes the analogy true.

Try the two examples below.

1. ____ is to hand as toe is to ____.

- A) touch - nail
- B) finger - line
- C) game - foot
- D) finger - foot
- E) game - nail

2. ____ is to win as fail is to ____.

- A) lose - succeed
- B) pass - succeed
- C) lose - try
- D) succeed - pass
- E) finish - lose

For example 1, the correct answer is D. A finger is part of a hand and a toe is part of a foot. For example 2, the correct answer is A. Lose is the opposite of win and fail is the opposite of succeed.

In working analogy problems, it is important to remember that the relationship between the first two words in the analogy must be the same as the relationship between the last two words in the analogy. In example 2, choice D is not correct. Succeed means about the same as win, but fail and pass are opposites. Because the relationship between the parts of the analogy is not the same for both words, the analogy is not true.

You should examine all five pairs of words carefully before making your choice. Look at the example below.

3. ____ is to red as green is to ____.

- A) apple - grass
- B) pink - blue
- C) apple - vegetable
- D) purple - turquoise
- E) orange - blue

The correct answer to example 3 is E. Orange is a secondary color while red is a primary color. Green is also a secondary color and blue is also a primary color.

Note that answer A is not correct. An apple is a fruit that is red but green is not a "fruit that is grass". The relationship among the parts of the analogy must be the same for the analogy to be true.

On the following page are ten practice problems. This practice test should take you no more than 3 minutes to complete. When you have finished all of the problems, turn the page and check your answers.

1. ____ is to 2 as A is to ____.
 A) B - 2
 B) two - Bee
 C) 1 - B
 D) first - second
 E) 1 - Z
2. ____ is to day as dark is to ____.
 A) work - dim
 B) light - night
 C) work - night
 D) pay - dim
 E) light - gloomy
3. ____ is to tiger as spot is to ____.
 A) stripe - leopard
 B) stripe - blemish
 C) cat - color
 D) wild - leopard
 E) cat - wild
4. ____ is to under as above is to ____.
 A) over - below
 B) over - beside
 C) below - beneath
 D) next - higher
 E) beneath - below
5. ____ is to ink as pencil is to ____.
 A) well - paper
 B) pen - write
 C) pen - lead
 D) write - lead
 E) well - eraser
6. ____ is to cat as baby is to ____.
 A) adult - dog
 B) dog - child
 C) kitten - boy
 D) clean - dirty
 E) kitten - adult
7. ____ is to soon as run is to ____.
 A) now - walk
 B) late - jog
 C) walk - jog
 D) moon - gun
 E) past - race
8. ____ is to day as February is to ____.
 A) one - year
 B) week - month
 C) Monday - month
 D) night - December
 E) last - short
9. ____ is to front as stern is to ____.
 A) side - strict
 B) bow - back
 C) bow - arrow
 D) ahead - back
 E) ahead - arrow
10. ____ is to egg as armor is to ____.
 A) crack - penetrate
 B) shell - knight
 C) yolk - steel
 D) fry - protect
 E) hen - suit

**Answers to Analogies
Practice Test**

1. C; 1 and 2 are the first numbers, A and B are the first letters.
2. B; It is light during the day and dark during the night.
3. A; Tigers have stripes, leopards have spots.
4. A; Over and under are opposites, so are above and below.
5. C; A pen writes with ink, a pencil writes with lead.
6. E; A kitten is a baby, a cat is an adult.
7. D; Moon and soon rhyme, so do run and gun.
8. C; Monday is the second day, February is the second month.
9. B; The bow is the front of a ship, the stern is the back.
10. B; A shell surrounds and protects an egg, armor surrounds and protects a knight.

Part 2. Arithmetic. Part 2 of the Probation Officer Examination contains 35 arithmetic problems. These problems require that you apply the operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division to problems dealing with whole numbers, fractions, and decimals. For each problem, four possible answers are given. You are to choose the correct answer to each problem.

Now try the sample problems below.

1. $8 + 13 =$

- A) 21
- B) 31
- C) 22
- D) 32

3. $1/2 - 1/4 =$

- A) $1/2$
- B) $1/4$
- C) $4/2$
- D) $2/4$

2. $3.1 - 2.6 =$

- A) 1.5
- B) 2.3
- C) 0.5
- D) 1.2

4. 5% of 22 =

- A) 0.10
- B) 11.0
- C) 0.11
- D) 1.1

The answer to problem one is 21, (A). The answer to problem two is 0.5. In problem 3 $1/2$ can be rewritten as $2/4$. Because $2/4 - 1/4 = 1/4$, the answer to problem 3 is B. Problem 4 can be rewritten as $.05 \times 22$, which equals 1.1.

You will be given 10 minutes to work the problems in Part 2. You should work as quickly as you can without becoming careless. If you are not sure of the answer to a problem, mark the choice that is your best guess.

You will not be permitted to use a calculator. Scratch paper will be provided for calculations -- **DO NOT MARK IN THE TEST BOOKLET.** The best preparation for arithmetic problems is lots of practice.

On the following page are more practice arithmetic problems. You should take no more than 3 minutes to complete these problems. When you have finished, turn the page and check your answers.

**Arithmetic
Practice Test**

1. $16 + 9 =$

- A) 24
- B) 25
- C) 26
- D) 27

2. $\frac{3}{4} - \frac{1}{4} =$

- A) $\frac{1}{3}$
- B) $\frac{3}{8}$
- C) $\frac{1}{2}$
- D) $\frac{4}{4}$

3. $.3 \times .12 =$

- A) .036
- B) .36
- C) 3.6
- D) 36.0

4. $96 \div 12 =$

- A) 9
- B) 8
- C) 7
- D) 6

5. $\frac{1}{4} + \frac{3}{2} =$

- A) $\frac{3}{8}$
- B) $\frac{4}{6}$
- C) $\frac{2}{12}$
- D) $\frac{7}{4}$

6. $.68 - .49 =$

- A) .29
- B) .28
- C) .19
- D) .18

7. $6 \times 135 =$

- A) 810
- B) 680
- C) 780
- D) 690

8. $\frac{3}{4} \div \frac{1}{2} =$

- A) $\frac{3}{2}$
- B) $\frac{3}{8}$
- C) $\frac{4}{6}$
- D) $\frac{2}{2}$

9. 12% of 24 =

- A) .50
- B) .48
- C) .288
- D) 2.88

10. $\frac{1}{3} \times \frac{1}{2} =$

- A) $\frac{2}{5}$
- B) $\frac{2}{6}$
- C) $\frac{1}{6}$
- D) $\frac{2}{3}$

**Answers to Practice
Arithmetic Test Problems**

1. B; 25.
2. C; $\frac{3}{4} - \frac{1}{4} = \frac{2}{4}$ which can be written as $\frac{1}{2}$
3. A; .036.
4. B; 8.
5. D; $\frac{3}{2} = \frac{6}{4}$, $\frac{6}{4} + \frac{1}{4} = \frac{7}{4}$.
6. C; .19.
7. A; 810.
8. A; $\frac{3}{4} \div \frac{1}{2}$ can be written as $\frac{3}{4} \times 2 = \frac{6}{4} = \frac{3}{2}$.
9. D; problem can be written as, $.12 \times 24$.
10. C; $\frac{1}{6}$.

Part 3. Personality Characteristics. Part 3 of the Probation Officer Examination contains items that assess several personal characteristics found to be important components of successful probation officer performance.

Part 3 consists of 80 statements. You are to read each statement and decide whether it is true or false for you. Examples of statements similar to those in Part 3 of the Probation Officer Examination are given below.

You plan and organize your work in detail.

You often have trouble sleeping at night.

Children today have it easier than you did.

You are happiest when you are doing something complex.

For the items in Part 3, it is generally best to go with your first reaction and not to spend too much time on any one item. It is very important that you answer every item. Leaving items blank can only result in a lower score and lessen your chances of being selected.

Part 3 of the examination is a measure of the normal aspects of personality that are relevant to being a productive employee and a good organizational citizen. Some of the personality characteristics assessed include your ability to deal successfully with stress, your self-control, initiative, sense of responsibility, and the manner in which you typically interact with others. This section of the test should not be confused with a psychological examination, which gauges the extent of your mental health. The Probation Officer Examination is **not** a measure of your mental well being and should not be construed as such.

Scoring Scheme

The Probation Officer Examination uses a compensatory scoring scheme. This means that relatively poor performance on one section of the exam can be offset by performing relatively better on another portion of the test. The individual sections of the test are not scored separately. What counts in terms of passing the test is your total score. You do not pass or fail individual sections of the examination. You pass or fail the entire test only.

A Final Word About Testing

Below are several suggestions about taking the Probation Officer Examination. If you work all of the problems in this booklet and follow the suggestions, you will be at your best when you take the exam.

In general, you should work quickly, but not so fast as to become careless. The time limits have been set to allow you plenty of time. If you have a question during testing, raise your hand and a proctor will assist you.

Always read all possible choices before marking your answer. If you don't know the answer to a problem it is usually best to skip it and go on to the others. If you finish before time is called, you can go back to any problems you may have skipped in that section.

If you are not sure of the answer to a problem, eliminate the answers you know are wrong and then mark the choice that is your best guess. You will not be penalized for guessing. Your score is simply the number of problems you answer correctly so you should not leave any problems unanswered even if you are only guessing.

You should get a good night's sleep the night before the examination. Some people find that eating a snack or light meal an hour or two before testing is good preparation. Finally, be sure to arrive at the testing location 10-15 minutes before testing is scheduled to begin.

Good luck.